

ALAN DALE INTERVIEWS LILLIAN RUSSELL.

O. Dromedaries shall not drag from me the precise date when I first met Lillian Russell. On that point I am dumb—for her dear sake, not for my own. We had both said facts to our faces. Miss Russell was even in the third blush of second matrimony. But it was long ago, and she has forgotten all about it. An actress's memory rarely dares to go back beyond "last season." People with vivid memories like mine really should not be allowed to live. They should be taken to a desert island and sprayed with Letho water (Compositif). If you make it Lillia water, I resign. No, I shan't say when it was that I first met Lillian Russell. These lines must deal with the second meeting, in a cozy little salmon-colored box at Weber & Fields's.

These gentlemen were politeness itself. They stopped a rehearsal, and one of them said, "Shall we bring her to you?" I hated the form of the question. It sounded as though Lillian were a lamb and I were a butcher, waiting for her to be led up to slaughter. Interviewing, I may remark, is not all beer and skittles. Domestic voices beat out after me, as I trot out on these expeditions. "Ah, now he's off to see the girls." Those words have a nice, rakish sound. But interviewing is a libel on them. There is no need to look like a young Greek god—as I do. Any old thing, with a towed name, would do as well.

Miss Russell was led in by the managers. As she entered the box was flooded with electric light, which the lady wore without a murmur. And Lillian can stand the whitest light with impunity. The closer you get to her the lovelier she is. She can snap her fingers at the scolding sisterhood that prates of skin beautifiers, hair restorers and wrinkle removers. She can stand the light of any day, and reveal in it. May you, sweet girl readers, when you reach the age of unmy-teen look so gorgeous and as radiant.

Lillian wore a negligee shirt-waist with the aplomb of a debutante. A coy diamond lurked under her chin, as though it were anxious to tickle her with its scintillations. One of those spotted veils, that look like a curant cake without the cake, covered her features lightly. She might have been a lovely princess who had dropped in to pose as my fairy god-daughter (I was going to say god-mother, but I felt it was too delicate).

Just for the sake of saying something (I suffer from stage-fright), I make some little remark about having met her once before, some years ago. Miss Russell don't remember it. Of course, she had met so many people, you know. One has to meet people. What are people for if they are not to be met? Possibly we had encountered each other. At any rate, she always read me, and I had treated her most kindly. Years ago I once said that she sang like a tea-kettle, but she had forgotten it. Luckily, with theatrical people, it is always the last criticism that counts. You can call an actress Heeete one week, and she won't mind it if you call her Venus the next. It is most convenient. The rule also works the other way. You can praise an actress for years, but once find fault with her and she forgets everything and loathes you bitterly. But this is mere prattle. Aux armes, mes citoyens!

I began. She had not abdicated her position as "queen of the comic opera stage," I hoped, by this engagement at the jolly little homelike music-hall, where we smoke and drink and call each other "old fellow," and are sorry when midnight comes, and we can't go on smoking and drinking and calling each other "old fellow."

Miss Russell smiled indulgently. I had wound her up. She shall speak now. Good-by.

"I have not given up comic opera," she said, "but, you know, I really can't live out of New York. It is a mere existence elsewhere. I love my horses, and my home, and my New York life. Fancy me doing the one-night stands! Why should I do it? When Weber and Fields came to me I was delighted. They are amusing people, aren't they? I have had a season's fun out of the rehearsals. I have laughed myself happy. In fact, I had to say to my managers, 'For goodness sake, let me laugh as much as I want to laugh at the rehearsals. I promise to be serious when it comes to the real thing.' By this engagement I stay in New York, I have no responsibilities, and if I'm not successful it is my fault, nobody else's."

Miss Russell looked as though she meant it. There was no underlying satire. "I've discovered this," she went on, "and it is that our public doesn't care for the serious. They will accept a Bernhardt or an Irving, but they want to be amused. Comic opera just now doesn't seem to be light enough. If you aim at the serious, as Francis Wilson has done, you are taken to task, aren't you? But I'll whisper in your ear that I have Massenet's new opera, 'Cendrillon,' in my possession, and I tell you that just to show you that I haven't given up comic opera by any means. I am merely biding my time. This is a peculiar public. People here are always clamoring for something new. I'm sorry to say that I can't think up any more sensations. I've come to the end of them. You can't accuse me of having been quite devoid of them in my time, can you? I don't intend to lose my diamonds, and I don't intend to break any contracts. I am no longer sensational."

There were many things I might have said at this point, don't you think? But I didn't say them. I would sooner have lunched upon my tongue than have done so. Miss Russell was as jolly and as amiable and as good natured as any woman I have met. It is the "lucky" ladies—the Oteros and the Cless—who lend themselves to impertinence. "If I were twenty years old," she said, "and as ambitious and as well situated as I am to-day, I think I should go in for grand opera. But when I was twenty I had to earn my own living, and wasn't able to indulge in study of any sort. You know that Mr. Abbey got me to work at 'Marian Lescart.' I studied it, and loved it. He was anxious for me to appear in 'Marian,' 'The Bohemian Girl' and one or two other operas. But the scheme fell through, and perhaps it is just as well. I imagine that I have had a better time in comic opera than I would ever have had in grand opera. Do I like grand opera? Immensely. I religiously go to hear it whenever I get a chance, and when I leave the Metropolitan Opera House I feel like thirty cents."

Miss Russell certainly could never look like that most irregular and vulgar fraction of a dollar, and I can't imagine that the sauerkraut qualities of "Tristan and Isolde" or "Siegfried" could ever achieve the result she mentioned. I asked her if the young comic opera queens who crop up each season, with the veneer of novelty upon them, bothered her at all.

She laughed. "I am interested in all the girls who start a comic opera life," she said. "The trouble with them is that they believe one success will make them famous. You read of this and that prima donna being rapturously received by an enthusiastic public. And after? The road is a difficult one. You have no sooner succeeded in one opera than you have to bother about a new one, just a trifle better. There are some charming young women in the comic opera field to-day, but one successful appearance is merely the beginning of it all. What I am doing now at Weber & Fields's is just drinking the essence of comic opera. When you see me in a new work, and say that I have made a success, what does it mean? It means that I have probably had three good songs. The rest doesn't count. In this music hall venture I shall have three good songs. The hungry comic opera prima donna never gets any more."

Miss Russell has never been accused of harboring "professional jealousy." Talk with her, and you will find that she doesn't know what it means. Probably she laughs (although she wouldn't admit it) at the girls who try each season to wrest her laurels from her, and are dead when the season ends. There is a good deal in a name, as far as the general public is concerned.

"I still take singing lessons," she said. "You think that I have nothing to learn? You don't know what a voice is. I get my instructor to bear me sing any song in which I feel uneasy. Sometimes one gets uncomfortable. I often feel that a song has eluded me. I know how it should be sung, but somehow or other, it eludes away. Then I go to these dear, good ladies, pour my troubles into their expansive bosoms, and lo! Lillian is herself again. I suppose that I remain popular because I enjoy good health. I am really a very healthy person. If anything, I am rather inclined to be fat."

This was heaping coals of fire upon me. I couldn't consistently say "Never!" and look indignant. I couldn't possibly pretend to believe that Miss Russell was plucking away, and that her bones stuck out in an ecstasy of emaciation. It was very awkward, and the prima donna smiled as though she were going to say: "Now, you hold, had man, go home, if you dare, and say that I'm an elephant."

"Yes, I am healthy," said Lillian, "and I am a girl of it. I want to keep my voice, and if there be anything in a wholesome regimen, I shall keep it. I live quietly, I exercise, and I don't worry myself. That is why I am still worth interviewing to-day."

"Still I take Miss Russell back!" asked a voice at the box door. Again I felt that I hated the form of the question. I might have been a surgeon, operating upon her. She might have been a patient about to be wheeled back to the invalid ward. Horrid, horrid fate—mine!

"Lovely woman," cried little Mr. Weber, "so easy to get along with!" "Charming lady," quoth long Mr. Fields, "so willing to do anything!" "Such an artist!" remarked the stage-manager, as though lost in admiration. I looked around. The box was dark. And I was left—like Lord Collin, who owned the daughter—interviewing.

MISS JOBYNA HOWLAND IN "RUPTURE OF HENTZAU."

HENRY MILLER AND J. H. BRENNAN IN "THE ONLY WAY."

MARIE BORROUGHS AS GEMMA IN "THE GADFLY."

NOTES OF THE THEATRES.

But one new play will be brought out in the city this week. It is a three-act frivolity suggested by the lack of knowledge by the upper classes in England, concerning American topography, manners and customs.

A wild and erring young scion of a British parent has been sent to the new country with the understanding that he remain away three years as a ranchman. This plan does not prove congenial to the young hopeful, who settles in New York, and after a time writes home, telling hair-raising stories of his vast cattle ranch near Buffalo and the desperadoes who surround him.

His uncle, however, accidentally learns the truth, and, desiring to save his nephew from the family wrath, sends a letter advising him to come back with a lot of Indians in tow and all manner of blood-curdling tales committed to memory. The letter miscarries, and Jack arrives home

sans Indian and sans knowledge of what has leaked out, and, to crown it all, on the same train with him goes a young American heiress who pretends to tell all.

To avoid exposure, a suit for his sister's hand, in the person of Arthur Lowe, is made to dress as a savage. Then a quick doctor from the Western United States appears with a true Indian, and the fun begins, heightened by the absence of Mr. Lowe, to search for whom a detective appears on the scene and disguises himself as a third redskin.

For the interpretation of this play, Mr. W. A. Brady and Joseph L. Grismer have engaged a company of a higher order than is usually identified with light entertainments. Some of the best known in the clever cast are M. A. Kennedy, Maude White, Kate Lester, Jane Corcoran and George Osbourne.

So successful was the engagement of James K. Hackett in "Rupert of Hentzau," at the Lyceum in April last, that Daniel Frohman has determined to revive the play at the Garden Theatre, beginning to-morrow night. The engagement will be for three weeks, with two matinees weekly—Wednesday and Saturday.

At the other theatres the plays are extensive in variety and generally good in quality. "The Ghetto," at the Broadway, continues to arouse attention. There are few stronger dramatic scenes than the one in this play at the end of the third act when Rafael, the young Jew, so cleverly personated by Joseph Haworth, bids his

soul away. It is furious in its intensity, and the curtain is called up a dozen times every night in response to the applause. "The Ghetto," as a play is a thoroughly earnest and praiseworthy effort. Joseph Haworth, who, for some reason, has been in the background recently, has placed himself in this admirable play.

"The Tyranny of Tears" at the Empire Theatre is John Drew's biggest success from every standpoint. Charles Frohman has decided to present his star in no other play throughout the regular engagement at the Empire. Wednesday matinees of "The Tyranny of Tears" will begin this week.

Henry Miller and "The Only Way" have been so well received that they will remain in New York for a long time. It will not be at the Herald Square, however, owing to the production of "Zangwill's house," "The Ghetto," their time at this theatre as soon as its term in its present quarter is up. Two matinees are given each week.

"Miss Hobbs" has apparently settled by the management before the end of Mr. Sotherton's season in New York. E. H. Sotherton and Virginia Harned enter upon the third week of their performances in "The King's Mistress" at Daly's Theatre. No change is yet announced in the current programme, though preparations

down to a long and prosperous run at the Lyceum, where Miss Annie Russell and her excellent supporting company are nightly pleasing large audiences. Indeed, Jerome K. Jerome's dainty comedy is apparently so much to the liking of the Lyceum clientele that it is now expected to run through the entire season.

Only three more weeks remain of the distinctively Casino success, "The Rounders." This combination of pretty girls, catchy music and funny men will shortly give way to the Nielsen Opera Company. "The Gypsy," which has been running since the first of the season, continues to vie with Dan Gilman, "The Rounders" and "The Gypsy." Only and the other comedians, while Mabel Gilman, "The Rounders" and "The Gypsy," have been back from Australia, has replaced Gwyneth as the leader of the German band. The Sunday night concert has been discontinued.

At the New York Marguerite Cornille, the pretty French singer, has been well received. "The Man in the Moon, Jr." will be produced during the week, introducing a number of new actors, among them being Julius Steger, who will be the leading Irvin and will have two new songs, the number of new actors, among them being Reginald De Koven and Gustave Kerner, and a kissing duet with Christie McDonald. Sam Bernard has evolved a new batch of jokes and sayings especially adapted for the Dewey festival.

Mrs. Leslie Carter closes her long "Zaza" run in New York on Saturday night. Her triumph in all the more remarkable triumph having lasted all through one season, it was resumed with practically the same enormous business at the same theatre the next season. Mrs. Carter will give a Wednesday matinee of "Zaza" at the Garden Theatre, which will be only the usual seven performances, as the Saturday matinee will be omitted.

At the Harlem Opera House the London Royalty Theatre's comedy, "A Little Bit of Sunshine," will begin a week's engagement to-morrow.

Kellar, the famous magician, will be at the Grand Opera House this week. "A Young Wife" at the Fourteenth Street Theatre has been so successful that it will remain until October 14. Matinees will be given this week on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

The Murray Hill Theatre will open for the season on Monday afternoon, inaugurating its second year with a revival of "The King's Mistress" at Daly's Theatre. A fine production of James A. Herne's "Hearts of Oak" will be given at the Metropolitan Theatre this week, with E. P.

Sullivan in the part formerly played by Mr. Herne, and Miss Ida Hamilton in that created by Mrs. Herne. "The Gadfly," with Mr. Stuart Robson as the cynical conspirator, will be at Wallick's Theatre only during the present week.

"Becky Sharp" now runs with remarkable smoothness at the Fifth Avenue Theatre. Not in a long time has there been a play in which there have been so many strong characters as are seen in "Becky Sharp." The first act presents three characters that are not seen thereafter, all of which are strongly played—those of Mrs. Crawley, by Miss Waterman; Briggs, by Miss Madderly, and Sir Pitt, by Mr. Ferguson. Mr. Ferguson is so true in his manner and acting to Thackeray's original that he creates an impression during his few minutes on the stage that remains with the auditor throughout the play.

Mr. Owen is very effective as Joseph Sedley and Mr. Plunkett gives a remarkably artistic portrait of the hypocritical Pitt Crawley. A feature of the play is more appreciated is furnished in the last act at Pumpnickel, by the German impersonator, who takes these parts—Messrs. Meyer, Reicher and Weigel—are Germans who have long been identified with the German stage in this city, and their work does much for the atmosphere of the act.

Donovans will tell Irish stories, Canfield and Carleton will be seen in a new musical comedy, the Angela Sisters will be heard in their unique whistling specialties, and Condit and Morey seen in their pretty home picture, "The Ties 'Tut Bind." A Dutch comedy sketch entitled "Have You Got a Nail," by Rae and Brusché, and an athletic skit called "A Lesson in Boxing" are among the new things to be introduced.

Dewey week at Proctor's uptown vaudeville house, the Pleasure Palace, will back to America, after a brilliant tour of Europe, that graceful and ingenious light dancer, Ida Fuller, sister of La Loie, and inventor of Loie's "The Fire and Flame" dance. The series of dances for this week include "A Color Study," "Spirit of the Storm," "Magic Lily" and "Fire and Flame." Others in the all-day bill at the Palace include Della Boney, McCole and Daniels, Fox and Foxie, Ellmore Sisters, Troubadour Trio, George E. Anatin, the Budworths and many others.

A programme of unusual excellence will be given at Hurlig & Semmon's, headed by Henry B. Dixey, of Adonis fame. The usual Sunday concert includes Pauline Hall, a star of the programme.

At Proctor's Twenty-third Street Theatre Camille D'Arville will this week sing several songs in her repertoire not heard before in the music halls. Among the other novelties are Lillian Green and William Friend in "Mrs. Bruno's Bargains." During Dewey week the doors of this popular theatre will be opened at 10 a. m. and the performance continued without a stop until 11 p. m.

At Huber's Museum the chief attraction this week will be "Enoch the Fish Man," who holds the record for long stays under water. The regular Sunday concert will be given to-night.

At the St. Nicholas Garden the Kaitern popular concerts will be continued, and a special programme has been selected for to-night.

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